



# Florida House of Representatives

*Representative Darren M. Soto*

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## Street Racing Fans Busted

In the early morning hours of June 21, 2009, officers moved in on a St. Petersburg street race with hundreds of spectators. A crowd cheered. Racers popped wheelies and spun their cars, zipping dangerously close to spectators. Tires squealed as the police moved in on the spectacle.

Last year, Representative Darren Soto (D-Orlando) sponsored legislation that made being a spectator to a street race illegal. Violators are charged with a non-criminal infraction that carries a minimum fine of \$80. On Sunday morning in St. Petersburg, officers issued citations to over 200 spectators.

“Street racing is illegal and deadly. Those who choose to promote this type of behavior are only adding to the problem,” said Representative Darren Soto.

State Representative Darren Soto is committed to toughening laws to curtail this dangerous and illegal activity. During the 2009 legislative session, Representative Soto sponsored House Bill 843, the Luis Rivera-Ortega Street Racing Act, which, had it become law, would have increased penalties for repeat offenders of street racing.

Though the bill did not pass in its entirety, Representative Soto is pleased that the definition of a “street race” was amended this year to include an element of

competition. The street racing statute was previously declared unconstitutional by a Florida appeals court. Without the amendment, street racing convictions would likely have been reversed on appeal.

On Monday, the St. Petersburg Times brought attention to the law enforcement response to street racing in an article, ["Police Slam Brakes On Drag Race Fans,"](#) that illustrates how legislative reforms are achieving results and saving lives.

"There are still more legal reforms that need to be approved next year to discourage repeat offenders of these dangerous activities," said Representative Soto.

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